

Turnage-Young House
196 E. Court Street
Memphis
Shelby County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-172

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TURNAGE-YOUNG HOUSE

HABS No. TN-172

Location: 196 East Court Street, Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee.
Latitude: 35° 08' 44"
Longitude: 90° 02' 56.5"

Present Use: Demolished July and August 1972.
(This report was written before the demolition).

Significance: Constructed in 1847, by attorney R.K. Turnage, this Greek Revival brick town house with its elegant Greek Doric portico was the last surviving private structure in downtown Memphis. In the 1850s it was purchased by the Young sisters who operated it as a girls' boarding school. It had been in continuous occupation by descendants of the Youngs.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Between 1847 and 1853.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following chain of title may be reconstructed from the Deed and Will Books of Shelby County.

1847 Deed November 1, 1847, recorded April 20, 1852 in Book 10 page 212 (Lot 561: \$1310.00)
John Overton
to
John D. Armour

1849 Title Bond May 8, 1849, recorded December 3, 1850 in Book 6 page 346 (Lien of \$1200.00)
John D. Armour
to
Rufus K. Turnage

1850 Trust Deed November 23, 1850, recorded December 3, 1850 in Book 6 page 347 (To secure \$3357.12)
Rufus K. Turnage
to
William A. Blythe, trustee

- 1853 Title Bond June 21, 1853, recorded June 21, 1853 in Book 14 page 84 (Part of Lot 561, to secure \$13,000.00)
Rufus K. Turnage
to
Wilie B. Miller
- 1853 Title Bond July 2, 1853, recorded July 2, 1853 in Book 14 page 176 (\$7500.00)
Wilie B. Miller
to
Misses Rachel S. Young and Agnes A. Young
- 1857 Deed July 10, 1857, recorded July 10, 1857 in Book 29 page 573
Wilie B. Miller
to
Rachel S. Young and Agnes A. Young
- 1941 Will January 23, 1941, recorded February 2, 1942 in Will Record 53 page 356
S. Etter Miller (granddaughter of Rachel S. Young)
to
Juliette Carter Read (niece)

- B. Historical Context: The Misses Young's School for Girls was conducted in the house from 1853 until 1860, after which no city directories are available for six years. Apparently it did not reopen after the Civil War. As many as forty girls were instructed in French, grammar, piano, and embroidery. Lecture classes and the dining room were in the basement; boarding students lived on the second floor.

This house remained in the Young family until it was razed in 1972; its last occupant was a great-granddaughter of Mrs. Rachel S. Young Miller. (Her husband was not a kin to Wilie B. Miller, an earlier owner of the house).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An L-shaped residential structure constructed before the Civil War. Both the first and second floors have a stairhall, two rooms on either side of the stairhall, and a back room which forms the short "arm" of the L. Exterior features include the Doric portico, common double-hung windows and a gable roof. The interior is generally in the Greek Revival style.

2. Condition of fabric: The house is in a state of disrepair with some structural failure, especially with regard to the wood porch structures and vertical wall separation on the east side.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 49'-4 1/2" east to west x 57'-3" north to south (front) x 40' to top of chimney (32'-8" to top of south front cornice). The building is a full two stories with a full basement the floor of which is one-half level below grade. The building is L-shaped facing south onto Court Street and the back of the L (west side) faces onto an alley. In the angle of the L is a wood porch.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are of exposed brick laid in common bond with a header every eighth course. The bricks are 4"x 8"x 2" with 1/2" mortar joint. A stucco finish is applied to the lower four feet of the exterior walls and is scored to resemble ashlar masonry varying in dimension around 15" x 36".
4. Structural system, framing: The building is of bearing wall construction with floor joists. The walls are 13-14" thick. The wood floor joists are a full cut 2" x 12".
5. Porches: There is a wood Greek Doric tetra-prostyle portico (9' x 14') on the south front of the house. It has two hollow round columns, 13 1/2" in diameter and 11'-11" high, with twenty-two flutes. They stand on shallow wood bases. Plain square wood columns are located at the corners of the porch and are aligned with the two plain pilasters at the wall. The columns are 13 1/2" square; the pilasters are 13 1/2" x 7". There is a wood deck supported by brick and stucco base and wood railings, with turned wood balusters in jug form. The wood steps measure 8" for risers and 10" for treads. They are flanked by brick and stucco piers.

A rear wood porch is located along the east side of the rear extension. This two-story porch has been slightly altered in time with the addition of an enclosed portion on the second floor. It appears that the first floor structural members are original. The porch is supported by brick piers below. It appears that the second floor was not originally enclosed or

roofed over as the structural members bear no resemblance to those on the first floor. A stairway connects the first and second floors on the east side of the porch and a short run of stairs provide access to the first floor. The second floor stairway has seventeen risers of 9" with treads of 10".

6. Chimneys: There are four brick and stucco chimneys on the house. Two chimneys are located at the exterior walls of the gable ends. They measure 3'-9" x 1'-10" and stand 2'-9" above the ridge which they straddle. Their exterior surface is flush with the exterior wall of the house. A third chimney is located about 19 feet behind the one on the east wall, is flush with the surface and is similar to the other two. A fourth chimney is situated at the center of the ridge of the hip roof which extends off the rear of the main gable roof. It measures 3'-11" x 2'-9" and stands 3'-1" above the ridge which it straddles.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main entry door is located at the center of the south facade. It measures 3'-6" x 9'-1 1/2" x 1 3/4" and has eight panels of various sizes. It has a 12" surround and is topped by a simple wood box entablature. The rear doors open onto the rear porch. The one providing access to the rear hall is 3'-0" x 7'-5 1/2" and is topped by a transom. The other door facing east onto the porch is 3'-1" x 9'-6" and has four recessed panels.

- b. Windows: There are three layers of windows. Those serving the basement are set in recessed areaways half below ground level. They measure 3'-7" x 6'-2". The main floor windows measure 3'-7" x 8'-2", while those on the second floor measure 3'-7" x 7'-8". All sash and frames are of wood; the windows are double-hung with six lights each sash. There are stone lintels on the south front, wood along the sides and rear. The basement windows on the west side are double-hung but smaller than those on the south front.

On the south front there are five rows of windows aligned vertically. On the second floor the center window is located directly over the entry door and portico. The axial openings are flanked on either side with two other windows. There are no openings on the east wall; those on the north and west are aligned vertically but do not reflect the ordered arrangement seen on the front.

8. Roof: The main roof is gabled with the ridge parallel to the front of the house; the gables terminate at the side walls with parapets. A chimney terminates each ridge. The eastern end of the building has two different roof slopes, the result of building alterations. The rear slope on that side is more gentle. The west portion of the building has two similar slopes although a hip roof interrupts the slope of the rear side and projects north over the room projection. The slope of the east side of the hip roof is extended to cover the rear porch.

There are brick parapets at the east and west gable ends and a parapet projecting through the roof just to the west of center of the roof. There is a simple box cornice projecting 15" from the face of the house on the south facade. Below it is a 21" high stone belt course with a flat surface. Along the rear projection there is a two-brick corbel just below the roof projection. The roof projection is just the roofing material.

The roof surface is rolled asphalt.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: All three levels, including the basement, have similar floor plans, varying only slightly in dimension and in some details.

Entrance is made to the main hall from the south entrance porch. This hall contains a wood stairway to the second floor. The first floor plan has a central hall, with a rear hall behind. To either side of the hall is a room; the rear hall is similarly flanked. In the northwest corner is another room which has a south access. The second floor plan is similar to the first. The basement floor plan is the same except for some minor changes along the center of the house. Entrance to the basement is via a stairway in the rear hall or under the front porch at its side.

2. Stairways: A simple yet elegant stairway graces the front entrance hall and provides access to the second floor. This dogleg stairs is 3'-2" wide and has twenty-one risers of 7'-7/8" (10 3/4" treads with 1" nosing) and one landing. The stairway has a turned wood newel post on the first floor which measures 3'-5" high and is 5" diameter at its greatest dimension. The newel post at the top of the stairs is an enlarged version of the railing baluster; it measures 2" diameter at the top and 2 3/4" at the bottom. The handrail is 2'-10" high, and is supported by tapering round balusters (1" at top, 1 1/2" bottom) set 5" apart.

Another first and second floor stairway is located in the rear halls.

The basement stairway is situated in the rear hall against the east wall. It is set off by a solid 2'-4" high railing/wall. It has a newel post at its base. There are thirteen risers of 9" (10" treads) x 3'-0". A door is located on the third step from the bottom.

3. Flooring: 5" to 6" pine boards; the basement floor is of dirt, but was most likely finished originally because of the finished quality of the other room surfaces.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wood lath and plaster. The ceiling height on the first floor is 12'-8"; that on the second floor is 13'-0". The basement ceiling height varies around 8'. Most of the basement ceiling is finished. The exception is in the area corresponding to the rear hall above. The same is true for the walls. In all the major rooms of the basement there was a vertical board wainscot, with plaster above.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All major doors in the house are of wood and measure 3'-1 3/4" x 9'-4" x 1 3/4" and have six panels. The door between the two halls on the first floor measures 7'-0" high and has a panel corresponding to transom height above the door on the rear hall side. The basement doors have been removed. They measure about 2'-10" x 7'-0". All doors are trimmed with rectilinear board moldings, 9" on the side and 12" at the head, and they are Greek Revival in style.

6. Decorative features and trim: There is a base molding in every room. Some are 11 1/2"; others 13 1/2". Main rooms on the first floor have a picture molding 27" down from the ceiling. The central hall has a cove molding.
7. Hardware: All original hardware is still in place. Cast-iron rim locks are found on all the doors. The one for the entrance door is the most interesting as it accommodates a large brass key in a rather unique keyhole. The keyhole is double ended so that the key may be inserted either right-side-up or upside-down. There are plain 4 1/2" brass butt hinges.
8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Heating is by heaters set in the rooms. These units were added later.

There is a fireplace in each of the major rooms on all levels including the basement (total of fifteen fireplaces). In the rooms of the southeast corner they are situated at the center of the east wall. Those in the northeast rooms are also centered on the east wall. Those in the southwest corner are situated at the center of the west wall. Those in the northwest corner of the main block are located on the north interior partition and are backed up with the fireplaces to the northwest room projection. The mantels of the fireplaces on the first floor rooms in the southeast, northeast and southwest corners have cast-iron mantels. All others are of wood with a cast-iron fireback within. The wood mantels are very plain with pilaster motifs to the sides. The cast-iron ones are more elaborate with molded form. The hearths are of tile.

- b. Lighting: The original gas lighting fixtures are still in place although they have not been used for some time. Electric lighting has been added throughout the first floor although it is sparse.
- c. Plumbing: Bathroom and kitchen facilities have been added in the northwest room projection.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building is located on the north side of Court Street between Third and Fourth Streets in the midst of high-rise office buildings and parking lots. The area has long ceased to be a residential area. There is an alley to the west of the house (ca. 4' from the wall) and one to the rear of the lot (north side). The house is set back about 25 feet from the street. There is a small brick structure at the northeast corner of the lot.
2. Landscaping: There is a small lawn at the front of the house, set off from the sidewalk by a stone curbing. There is a large magnolia tree (ca. 24" diameter) at the west end of the lawn. Part of the rear yard has given way to automobile parking. There is a crepe myrtle tree at the west side of the yard and other vegetation growing among the weeds.

Prepared by: Richard H. Hulan
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HABS West Tennessee
Project
Summer 1972

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This 1972 project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the West Tennessee Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by Robert C. Ciebner (University of Arizona), project supervisor, and Richard H. Hulan, project historian (Nashville), with architects James D. Skelton (University of Illinois), and Mark D. Frederickson (University of Arizona), and student architects John P. Vergos (University of Tennessee), and Darrell K. Pattison (University of Cincinnati), on the campus of Memphis State University.

Susan McCown, HABS Architectural Historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in the Fall of 1985, for transmittal to the Library of Congress.